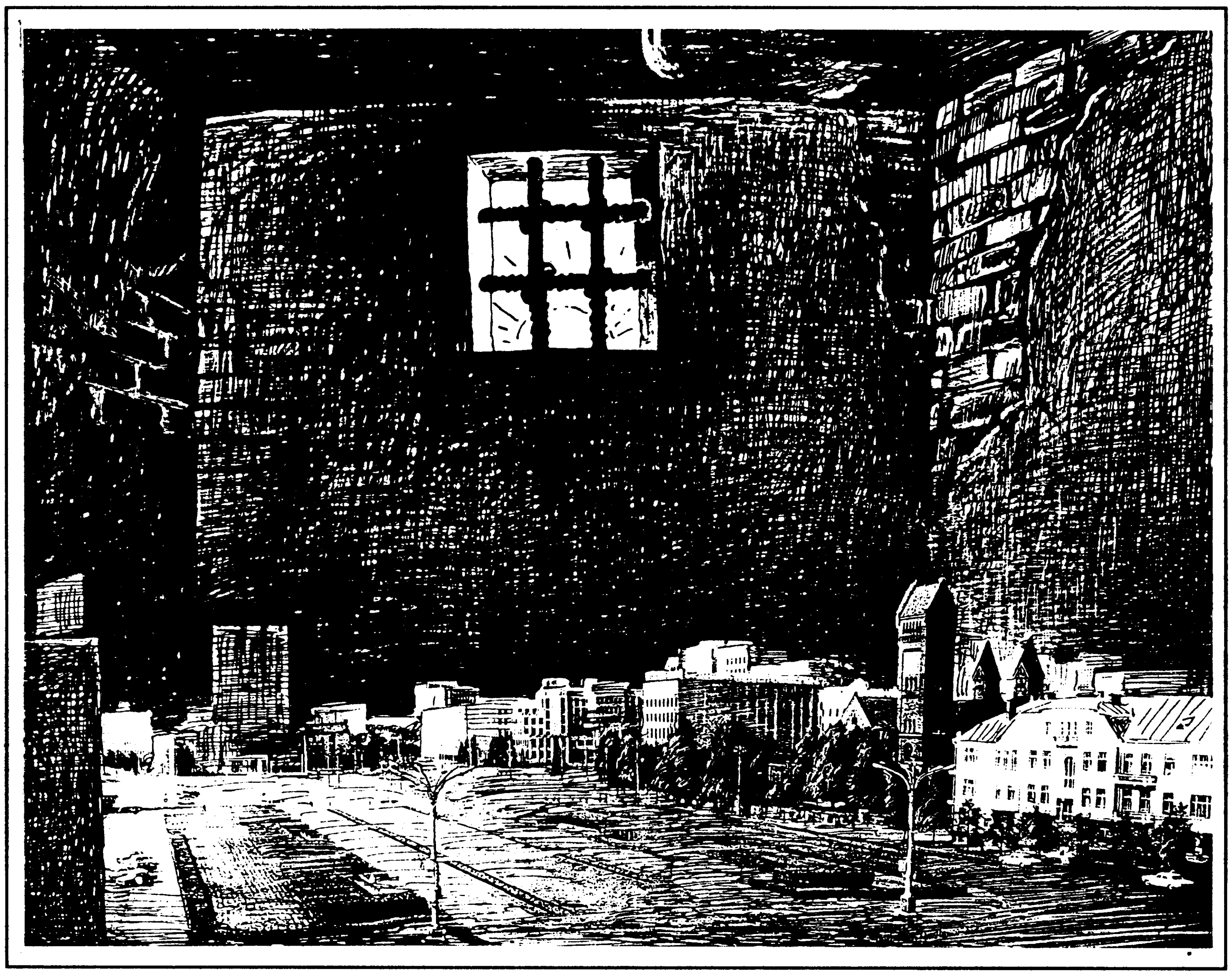
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№ 1
January 1998

The Right of Freedom

The Bulletin of the Human Rights Protection Committee in Belarus "Spring '96"



Belarus Behind Bolt and Bar

In his New Year Congratulation "the nationally elected" seems to have felicitated everyone, beginning from those "in the bosom of their families" to those "on the way". He has forgotten only those ones, who, owing to him, have celebrated these New Year and Christmas behind bolt and bar —Alexey Shidlovsky, a student, and Vadim Labkovich, a schoolboy, arrested in the end of last August as if for their writing of anti-presidential slogans on the walls in Stolbzy; Vadim Kabanchuk, Belarusian Politechnical Academy graduate, arrested October 12 for taking part in the spring demonstrations. Behind bolt and bar has celebrated this Christmas the well-known bard Andrey Melnikov, incriminated in the same thing as P.Sheremet and Dm.Zavadsky, journalists for Russian ORT channel, — viz. illegal crossing of the Belarus-Lithuania border... We could also recollect all those Belarussian "Mafiosi", locked up by President in the investigative isolation wards, — V.Leonov, Minister of Agriculture, and V.Starovoitov, twice Hero of Socialist Labour, Chairman of the famous collective farm "Rassvet", as well as T.Vinnikova, former Chief of National Bank, released according to her state of health, but still kept under house arrest without any arraignments...

The trials over opposition members spread over the whole December. The violation of presidential decree №5 during the authorised procession on November 23 (connected with the anniversary of committed by A.Lukashenko coup d'etat) was incriminated to four opposition leaders. While the trials over G.Karpenko and L.Gryaznova were delayed till January of the new year, L.Borschevsky was levied a 30-million-roubles' fine, and V.Stchukin, the Belarusian absolute leader in sums of levied earlier fines, received from the jury "the prescription" to celebrate the New Year's Eve behind bars — 10 days of administrative arrest.

The lawsuit over P.Sheremet and Dm.Zavadsky turns gradually to obvious farce. Already this year, during some one week, the trial has been reserved thrice because of different reasons. What concerns the sitting on January 10, there happened an absolutely absurd event: the given accusation video turned out to be completely impossible to watch — so it was defective. There is no absurd, though. In average state it would be the proof that the film had been fabricated... The same day the Russian ORT channel re-showed that "famous" P.Sheremet's reportage from the Belarus-Lithuania border. And again, after the review, the bewilderment remained: what was the spark that set the forest on fire, why this international scandal arose? The journalists were just doing their professional duty. That's the thing.

One more sad "tradition" has been prolonged last year. Yuri Khastchevatsky, a director, the author of the sensational motion

(please see page 3)

The Only Way for Us to Win

You keep in your hand the first number of a new independent newsletter.

Independent from whom and what?

From authorities and governments, from verticals and horizontals, from principles and responsibilities created by them.

Free from whom and what?

From censorship and bias, from prejudgement and lackeying to anyone.

We will serve only the Truth, our Motherland and eternal ideals of the highest justice — everyone's right for freedom, life, free thoughts and beliefs, conscience and religion...

History brings up to Belarusian people one hardship after another. If not foreign then "our own" "benefactors" thrust into its arms with sounding promises of a rich and happy life. And it believes and slips, believes and slips...

For hundreds of years the best sons and daughters of Belarusian people have been fighting for a free, full-blooded and happy life. Nowadays the struggle of Belarusians for their rights became also the struggle against coming dictatorship. And this struggle continues every day, every minute. In jails and in courts, in streets and on squares... It is clear that state mass media suppress it and present deliberate lies. And as our main aim we make the task to inform people about those who fight and suffer for democracy.

"All people are born free and equal...", every people has the right for a worthy life... But this right — we have made sure of it — does not come by itself, it is not given from above. It is to be struggled for. And only by understanding of this fact and by its daily confirmation — we are to win.

Long live Belarus!

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Freedom to Political Prisoners!

Three young Belarussian citizens have been kept behind bars for five months. The whole world knows about them and only in Belarus people try to pretend that nothing at all happens. In the first number of our newsletter we put the detailed data about the Belarusian prisoners of conscience, who today endure the crucifixion and mockery for their political credos.

Alexey Shidlovsky, 18, a student of School of Journalism, Belarusian State University, a member of the youth organisation "Young Front". In Spring 1997 he was arrested for 10 days for participation in student demonstrations protesting against A.Lukashenko's regime, after what he hunger-stroke. For active politics was expelled from the University. On August 25, 1997 was seized and charged with "malignant disorderly conduct" — namely writing on the walls and fences of anti-Lukashenko slogans (graffiti) in Stolbzy, 70 km away from Minsk. Again hunger-stroke in protest, but was made by force to quit. In Zhodino prison, whe-re he is kept till the trial, he was beaten by the hands of prison administration till he lost consciousness. Resided in the prison hospital for a long time. In prison the state of his health considerably worsened. Filed charges: art.201 p.2 of Criminal Code of RB (malig-nant disorderly conduct) and art.86 p.2 (desecration of state symbols). After four months of jail there "emerged" one more article — "vandalism".

Illnesses: cardiac arrhythmia, asthma attacks, and kidney illness.

The counsel's requests to change the preventive punishment were left unsatisfied. According to this article of Criminal Code of RB he faces a term up to five years in custody.

Vadim Labkovich, 16, 11th grade student at Minsk Secondary School 95. For the first time was seized in spring 1997 during a mass youth manifestation against the dictatorial regime. After the record was drown his cause was forwarded to the Juvenile Committee. Was seized on August 28, 1997 on the same issue as A.Shidlovsky. Now is kept in Zhodino Investigative Ward. Filed charges: art.201 p.2 and art. 86 p.2. He also faces the adding of the article about "vandalism".

The counsel's request to change the preventive punishment was rejected by Mr.Dobrodey, Chairman of Stolbzy Town Court. During the first month his mother's visitorial power was ignored by the region attorney (which is by itself is a legal abuse as Vadim is under age). The reason for it was her refuse to testify in her son's case (against him). The mother's claim to change the preventive punishment, addressed to A.Lukashenko, was not answered.

The mother sent Vadim to the investigative ward a textbook in the Belarusian language. On his turn he sent it by "prison mail" to his friend Alexey Shidlovsky. Further the textbook was confiscated from Shidlovsky and torn.

Now V.Labkovich has his school textbooks, but the Warden of the investigative ward did not allow the teachers to come and check the learnt material.

Vadim suffers sore legs and stenocardia after angina.

In the end of November V.Labkovich has been deprived of the right to receive parcels.



Vadim Kabanchuk, 22, a Belarusian Politechnical Academy graduate. Was arrested for participation in the spring demonstrations after a mass opposition action on October 12. Is charged on art.201 p.2 (malignant disorderly conduct), though socalled "complainant" militia officer has no claims towards V.Kabanchuk. The main reason for apprehension turned out to be a video. There is an attempt to add to his case his participation in other mass manifestations. Now he is kept in Minsk Investigative Ward on Volodarsky Street.

Two Vadim's great-grandfathers perished in Stalin's camps in Siberia. A grandmother had been celled for eight years when Stalin was in office and returned home blind.

Vadim's illnesses: two-sided purulent maxillary sinusitis, chronic pyelonephritis, chronic tonsillitis, and tonsill-myocarditis-dystrophy.

His mother was prohibited to pass the necessary medicine to V.Kabanchuk. This fact was explained by his well-being, though in the letter to his mother Vadim made a list of essential for him medicaments.

Stand Fast, Guys!

On Saturday, December 20 it was a working day in the United Nations. A great group of American Belarusians gathered opposite the main entrance of the UN house on the 1st Avenue in New York to protest against the regime of Lukashenko, who constrains under ages for their political views, keeps the youth behind bolt and bar neither with inquest nor trial, beats people.

The demonstrators' demand was to release the political prisoners — a 16-year-old schoolboy Vadim Labkovich, an 18-year-old student Alexey Shidlovsky and a recent graduate from the Belarusian Politechnical Academy Vadim Kabanchuk.

Above the demonstrators there were surging a lot of white-red-white flags and placards in Belarusian and English: "We demand freedom to political prisoners in Belarus", "We demand to disprison V.Labkovich, A.Shidlovsky, V.Kabanchuk — the political prisoners of the Lukashenko's regime", "Lukashenko has turned Belarus into prison!" and so on.

Those present called out slogans, handed round to Americans (including policemen) flysheets, addressed a meeting, called the problem of V.Labkovich, A.Shidlovsky and V.Kabanchuk's discharge the most topical one for today's Belarusian society and defenders of human rights, because men's honour, freedom, health and life at large of the imprisoned are in danger. Belarusians of the whole world must press for the discharge of these young heroes, who sacrifice themselves and suffer from mockery for the best future of their Motherland.

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And Was There a Girl?

In the "Shidlovsky-Labkovich case" there is a rather shadowy place. The official press somehow prefers to cushion it. It is about a 19-year-old student of the European Humanitarian University Alina Belskaya and her leaving for Finland and appeal for political asylum. After the information that had appeared on Russian TV and on the pages of some Moscow newspapers the Belarusian side just had to answer on this fact. But how? It is clear that by an official contradiction of it. They say that there is no such girl, no such student, no such habitant in Minsk, but if she existed then no secret services have been interested in her, nobody has called her anywhere, nothing has threatened her — all this is just myths made by CIA, Belarusian Popular Front and other foes of the Belarus-Russia union. And "The Sovetskaya Belorussia" appeared to be the only state edition that responded to the information about A.Belskaya's deed, allowed itself to rally a bit: girls are running abroad in order to, we know ... hahhah..., but somebody makes from them emigrants...

We must say that Alina Belskaya is a real being. She was born and has lived in Minsk. Here live her parents. Here she finished school and here she has a lot of friends and acquaintances. Here she has studied at a prestigious high school. And it is possible that nothing would have made her leave her motherland but for the investigators of the "Labkovich-Shidlovsky case", who got interested in her person; but for the investigator Shershen, who called her September 26, 1997 to the KGB bureau "to testify"; but for an obvious threat to her life and health...

Alina managed to void Belarus through Moscow. We hope that even there, far away from her homeland, she will be able to serve the democracy.

But why the authorities hush up all this? Perhaps, they do not want to admit the emigration tendency among young citizens of Belarus. It is natural in the case with Poznyak and Naumchik — they are "derelicts", but it would be better to keep silent about the fact that more and more young people do not want to link their future with such a regime...

Mark Shaghal's banishment out of Vitebsk in 1922 was not the first but a far-famed crime, committed by the communist authorities of Belarus against creative intellectuals, this action of ostracism remaining in force literally till the recent time. While in 1987 people of the whole world were celebrating the 100th anniversary of the artist, the only country, where any official arrangements were prohibited, was the motherland of this great painter — Belarus.

Art History a la BSSR

Local commissars from art came to the top during the Stalin's times, having broken the lives of thousands of creators. The era of post-Stalin thaws and stagnation established the rules and methods and left the content — the mockery on national culture and its bearers as policy of the state. Gorbachev's "perestroika" ("reconstruction") was inaugurated in Belarus by severe punitive acts of KGB, mass battery and arrests of the creative intellectuals on April 20, 1986 and October 30, 1988. Nevertheless all people hoped that the fiasco in 1991 of a authorities-planned political (political-aesthetic?) trial over the philosopher Valery Sedov, who as if had damaged the Lenin monument by hanging on it a jack-straw, was the last fits of the able to see Soviet Femida.

With the establishment in the country of Lukashenko's dictatorship the red-tape nostalgia announced the comeback to the division of the creative intellectuals between "faithful" and "not faithful" according to already known criteria. The orthodox canon of allegiance was opened in the A.Kistchenko's monumental tapestry "Famous People of the Human History", where the author added the figure of the native dictator with a gloriole over his head. As well as in the fake videos devoted the democratic opposition of the fabulous Azarenok. But what concerns the not faithful creators — there is a stick for them. Thus was imprisoned the artist Mikola Kupava. With his creation — the icon "God's Mother from Chernobyl" — in his hands, the artist Ales Marochkin was exposed to severe beating during the procession dedicated to the memory of Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster's victims. In December 1997 the director Yuri Khastchevatsky was beaten...



On the photo: a Rygor Kiyko's work "Inspiration".

Just before the catholic Christmas the metropolitan public had an opportunity to meet the creative works of one more "public enemy". In the culture centre of St. Simon and Helen Cathedral the works of the artist Rygor Kiyko were exhibited. Though the opening day is always a feast, it was alloyed as the artist was menaced by the Damocles sword — the sentence of two years of correctional labour for the participation on March 23, 1997 in the demonstration dedicated to the anniversary of the Independence Declaration in Belarus in 1918. This happened after four months of preliminary confinement under anti-human conditions in Lukashenko's prison.

The famous artist has displayed the works of different years . The stylistic peculiarities of his ceramic vases, compositions of figures appeared to be the poetry of images, informed plasticity, delicate harmony. The artist loves his country and protects it by creating beauty. And unlike many other people he is not afraid of showing his civil views.

Times of troubles divide people into heroes and antiheroes.

Valery BUIVAL

Belarus Behind Bolt and Bar

(continued from page 1)

picture "The Common President", was exposed to severe beating in his own studio at the very end of the year. Why do we speak about a tradition? Just because this case naturally fits the chain of other ones that have happened before: the battery of Supreme Soviet delegates of the 12th Convocation, gunning of the delegate V.Gonchar's car, the porch assault on the delegate A.Lebedko, gunning of the house of I.Germenchuk, the editor of the newspaper "Svaboda", beating of professors Savitsky and Anzypovich, journalists Semashko, Tarletsky, Stchukin, Khalip... In none of the cases the guilty were found and punished.

On January 13 our neighbour Lithuania, which, by the way, not long ago elected an emigrant from former "forest brethren" Valdas Adamkus its new President, commemorated the anniversary of the bloody happenings of 1991. It seems to have happened only a short time ago, but it has already become a part of History. Lithuania showed then its dead earnest to break away from "the nations' prison" — the USSR. And it made the grade. It is an example for us. Nowadays with us the slogan to break away from the chains of dictatorship into the free world becomes topical again. In the same New Year Congratulation "the nationally elected" called Belarusians "to build the optimism". No, thank you, we have already built all these "isms", hidden even under more beautifully decorated and more reasonably stated formulas. We will build and rebuild our home Belarus — the independent, sovereign, democratic Belarusian State.

Andrey NALIVA

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Total Dictatorship

A Report on the State of Human Rights in Belarus

The communist system, collapsed together with the Soviet Union in the beginning of 90s, left to independent Republic of Belarus as its heritage quite a lot of problems. Their roots are hidden in the past. During two centuries, since Belarus incorporated into the Russian empire and afterwards into the Soviet Union, no elements of democracy existed in the country, furthermore during the last 70 years even the deliberate obliteration of any kind of otherwise-mindedness was carried out. As a result a certain structure of a closed society was shaped, living according to the principles different from the democratic models, widely spread, for instance, in the free Europe.



...Belarus is not Cuba, which is separated by water from the whole world. Belarus lies practically in the very centre of Europe. And the authorities have to consider this fact...

Precisely because of this fact af-ter the collapse of the Soviet Union the new state form of government, proposed by former communist nomenclature, did not guarantee the stability and inconvertibility of democratic reforms. According to this model the future of democracy was on a string of will of the one person, who became the head of the country — of the president.

Consequently the rise to power of the former communist system's pupil (the way he came in is an individual question) brought to the democratic reforms curtailment in society, economics and in the governance system and in many cases to the classical dictatorship setting. While speaking about Belarus we can distinguish a "soft" kind of dictatorship, as Belarus is not Cuba, which is separated by water from the whole world. Belarus lies practically in the very centre of Europe. And the authorities have to consider this fact. As well as the reaction of the society, which scarcely would stand a rigid, total dictatorship. But a significant part of the Belarussian society has not felt yet the value of democracy and does not see the links between the democratic system of the society and its well-being.

That is why A.Lukashenko, employing the structure of the officialdom, preserved from the old communist system, and the frameworks of the former KGB, which have in Belarus their own interests and are main implementators of the President's strategic programs (the facts speak for it), "fights" with the democratic institutions, their disappearance or alteration not affecting root and branch his image of a politician-populist in the society. The gradation and succession of the Belarussian redemocratization are its main distinctions, and this points to the fact that the actions of the Belarusian president and his cabinet have been prearranged.

As the beginning point of the redemocratization we may consider the case of a group of opposition delegates of Parliament having been beaten by a special squad right in the sitting hall in 1995. Silence, kept by the rest of the delegates, who hoped to come to an understanding with the President (consequently there was no reaction of Parliament at all), actually pronounced a sentence to the phenomenon of Belarusian parliamentarism. The next move of the President and the powers that stood behind him was directed on the violent alteration of Constitution in autumn 1996. The role of Parliament in the governance was roughly limited, the anti-constitutional adjournment of Parliament, hand-picking from the members of Parliament of those welcomed by the President and forming of a so-called "pocket" Parliament, admitted by no European country except for Russia, followed.

...By 1996 the Constitutional Court had counted 17 gross contraventions of the Belarusian Constitution by the President's decrees. None of the Constitutional Court's resolutions were fulfilled by the President, and the Constitutional Court was disbanded...

The personnel selection for all branches of the state power is carried out on the basis of people's personal fidelity to the President. Thus, in connection with the constitutional crisis, in the end of 1996 the President practically dispelled the Constitutional Court and appointed (!) new juries. The President gave himself the right to discharge the constitutional juries. Respectively, the whole judiciary system in Belarus is administrated by the President. The Attorney-General of Belarus, replaced by the President in the end of 1996, nowadays performs visibly lawless and anti-constitutional charges of the President.

...All Belarusian independent newspapers are being published abroad, in Lithuania...

In his legal system A.Lukashenko allotted himself with the full powers to pass decrees, which at his pen-and-ink direction signify more than those acts of legislation, elaborated and enacted by prior parliaments. By 1996 the Constitutional Court had counted 17 gross contraventions of the Belarusian Constitution by the President's decrees. None of the Constitutional Court's resolutions were fulfilled by the President, and the Constitutional Court was dispelled.

As the result of the enacted decrees the proxy of the authoritative and repressive structures has broadened at no allowance. To a great degree have broadened the authorities of the KGB and the President's Security Corps, which have obtained the right to prosecute field and official detection actions, the right to break into the flats, to prosecute searches and other repressive acts, which could be set against dissidents.

The seizure and accroachment of all power systems were treading together on the main freedoms of democracy, received by the Belarusian society in the result of the former communist system's collapse in the beginning of the 90s.

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Free advocateship was eliminated in 1997. Department of Justice of Belarus certified the advocacy licenses only of the advocates-members of the advocatory union, the latter being completely administrated by the same Department. In the end of 1997 private notarial practice was liquidated.

Almost all mass media is in the state's hands, no criticism addressed to the President, government or state policy being permitted. The editors of the newspapers, that complained the president's or government's policy or criticised some aspects of their activities, were fined, their places being filled in by loyal to the authorities and president journalists.

> *...In 1997 free advocateship and private notarial practice were eliminated...*

All TV channels are state-owned, and the criticism of the president and government's policy is just impermissible there. The journalists that tried to give objective information were fined. The government's political opponents do not have an access to mass media. While the president's and government's actions are shamelessly praised and the opposition is groundlessly abused, people are given the biased information on all the political questions to dictatorship's advantage.

The same is happening on broadcasting stations, overwhelming majority of them belonging to the state. The stations exercising free-thinking are being closed, as the broadcasting channels are the property of Ministry of Communications. (E.g. The only independent Belarusian-language broadcasting station 101.2 was closed in 1995 under the pretence of transmitter prophylaxy, its work never to be renewed.)

Some independent newspapers, which oppose dictatorship and try to give objective information, are being constantly pressed on. Objectionable newspapers are being closed (in the end of November the most popular democratic newspaper "Swaboda" was shut down), state printing-houses are prohibited to make with them printing contracts. What concerns the independent printing-houses, they are afraid of printing them, as thereby their activity may be at any moment arrested by the authorities. That is why all the independent newspapers are being published abroad, in Lithuania. Journalists' persecution is going on. The house of I.Germenchuk, the editor of the newspaper "Swaboda", was gunned in 1996. S.Adamovich, a poet-journalist, has spent eight months in jail in 1996. P.Sheremet, a journalist for Russia's ORT television, has been kept behind bars for several months in 1997. A.Stupnikov, a journalist for Russia's NTV channel, was disaccredited and exiled in 1997. The journalist hunt continues on the rallies and after them. Several dozens of journalist, among them both foreign (Polish, Japanese, Russian, Ukrainian) and Belarusian independent representatives, had been beaten only in the terms of 1996-1997. The latest fact is the kidnapping with hazard to life of A.Babenin, a journalist for the newspaper "Imya", and the initiation of a criminal proceeding against I.Khalip, a journalist for the same newspaper.

The restrictive amendments of the Press Law, enacted in the end of 1997, may, according to journalists, bring to the absolute cessation of independent mass media publishing in 1998.

We should not forget about the printing- and publishing-houses re-registration, declared by the authorities in the end of 1997, which will obstract greatly publishing activities and let the state administrate completely the printing productivity.

With the help of the enacted president's specific decrees and laws the freedom of meetings and demonstrations is noticeably restrained. It is quite impossible to fulfil all the conditions of these rallies. The result of the year 1997 was more than 1300 people detained by militia during meetings, processions, demonstrations, pickets and after them, most of these people being later sentenced. The demonstrators are levied fines up to 300 minimal wages (about $1500). As the convicted people are unable to pay the forfeit, their property gets distraint, a great part of their salaries is being ciphered out. For some time past practically all the leaders of oppositional parties were convicted; Zenon Poznyak, the leader of a most powerful oppositional party Belarusian Popular Front (BNF), and S.Naumchik, a secretary of the same BNF, had to emigrate from Belarus in spring 1996 and received status of political refugees in the USA.

Criminal proceedings were initiated against dozens of people in 1996-1997 for taking part in opposition rallies. Thus on November 14, 1997 in Minsk City Court five people were convicted for taking part in opposition rallies in the last spring. All of them were sentenced to two years of correctional labour.



In an oppressive way the authorities deal with the youth that are not agree to make peace with the dictatorship in the country. An 18-year-old student A.Shidlovsky and a 16-year-old schoolboy V.Labkovich have been kept in prison for 5 months, their guilt being writing of anti-dictatorial slogans on the walls (graffiti). V.Kabanchuk, an activist of the oppositional youth organisation "Young Front", being seriously ill, has been kept in jail for the last three months.

At the same time not a single law machinery workman has been brought to responsibility for the abuse of powers with using sinews or special means quoad demonstrators.

Great difficulties appear during registration of public organisations and state-independent labour unions, some of them still cannot check in.

The policy of today's Belarusian authorities is directed on the discrimination of the national culture (the latest example: the Belarusian State Theatre "Volnaya Scena" was deprived of the building for staging of a B.Brecht's play, which preaches the dictatorial regime).

The fight against the Belarusian language continues (during the last three years the number of first-graders of the classes with Belarusian-language education has declined in Minsk from 80 to 7.5 per cent, in Grodno from 75 to 2.5 per cent). The number of Belarusian-language books, published by the state publishing-houses, as well as the number of Belarusian-language programmes on radio and TV have considerably decreased.

> *...In 1997 more than 1300 people were detained by militia during meetings, processions, demonstrations, pickets and after them...*

The History of Belarus is being practically re-written; new fabricated textbooks on History are being created; new Belarusian Encyclopaedia edition is being roughly reviewed in the direction needed by the authorities; the Stalin's era of the history is being officially reconsidered with the attempts of acquitting of the communist dictator (General Office of Public Prosecutor has renewed the researches of the place of mass destruction in Kurapaty, near Minsk, in order to disprove the conclusions drawn before).

The victims of the unlegitimate lynching are not only members of opposition, but also President's officials. For the sake of his personal rating among voters the president presents a theatricalized fight with corruption. Among the arrested without adequate arguments we may name T.Vinnicova, National Bank Chief, who, being seriously ill, has been jailed for 10 months and now is kept under home arrest, and V.Leonov, Minister of Agriculture. The officialdom is kept in awe and is plainly terrified by the president.

The number of the capitally convicted and the number of capital crimes is on the increase. Preliminary detention may last up to 1.5 years, and the detention time constraints are in the line of Office of Public Prosecutor instead of courts of justice.

We may state that the dictatorship's coming and human rights' restraint are passing in Belarus in all directions.

Under these conditions we consider it extremely important to educate the citizens of Belarus, to influence the dictator and dictatorial regime on the international level, as well as to foster Belarusian democracy and its institutions: regime-opposed political parties, legislative Supreme Soviet, state-independent labour unions and remedial organisations.

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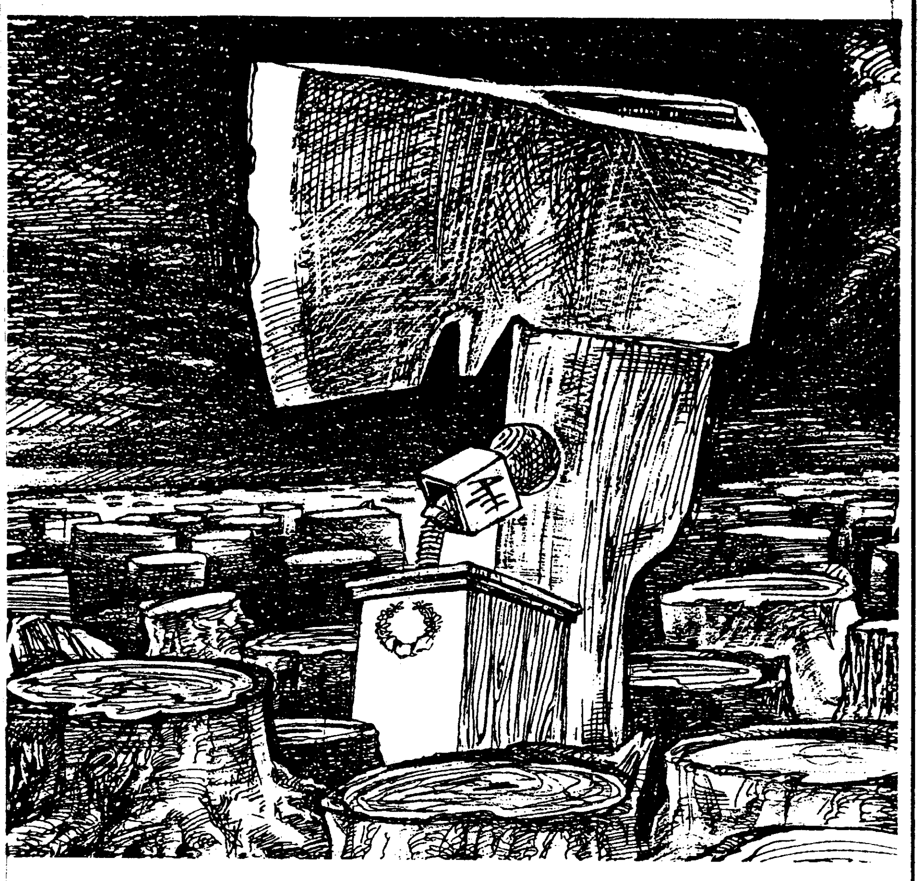
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Politics Facts Comments

December 2 — A.Lukashenko's personal security chief Yuri Borodich, who took part in the beating of Supreme Soviet's deputies of the 12th convocation, was elected president of the Belarusian hockey federation. Down in his name there is one more violation of human rights. Former SS deputies of the 12th convocation L.Borstchevsky, S.Popkov, Y.Belenky and B.Gyunter have written a letter to the president of the international ice-hockey federation Mr.Rene Fasel. In this letter they ask him "to minimise the official contacts with Mr.Borodich. Another modus operandi would be offensive for thousands of victims of Belarusian dictatorial regime, especially for those kept in prisons for their political views."

December 5 — BPF's members V.Rudy and V.Svizunov were captured in Bobruisk at the DTiA clock-house, brought to the Pervomaisky District Militia Station of Bobruisk and kept there for three hours. A record was compiled.

December 10 — "Young Front" (a youth fraction of Belarusian Popular Front "Vozrozhdenie") hold a Zhodino-Minsk-Stolbzy non-stop, devoted to the adoption of the Human Rights Declaration and levelled against the custody of the "Young Front"'s members A.Shidlovsky, V.Labkovich and V.Kabanchuk. The authorities did not permit to run through Minsk and routed the runners along the Minsk cut-off. During the run several attempts of its frustration were undertaken. The first car, going with the Minsk runners, got stopped by militia five times on its way to Zhodino. The driver was abridged of his driver's license and talon, the flags of the first three runners were deprived, though later returned. All the following cars, with runners going to the run route, were watched and checked. The car with TV operator S.Chirik was stopped by militia at noonday near the cinema-house "October", with the attempts to strip his videotape of the run. On the crossing of the Minsk cut-off with the Stolbzy high-way the run was stopped by the militia officers, by which the latters broke their own permission.



Belarusian liberty of speech.

December 10 — "Molodaya Gramada", a youth social-democratical organisation, picketed in the protest against violations of human rights in Belarus. A picket, handing out the flysheets, was seized by militia.

December 10 — A protest rally against dictatorship and human rights violations, sponsored by Independent Press Aid Foundation and the Human Rights Protection Committee "Spring '96", was held in Minsk.

December 12 — Minsk City Executive Committee banned the BNF's Human Rights Protection Committee to picket on December 20 for the advocacy of the conscience prisoners V.Labkovich, A.Shidlovsky and V.Kabanchuk.

December 16 — The organizers of the meeting of Gomel habitants with the journalists of Belarusian independent editions were tried in Gomel. The judge Vasily Begun from the Central Region Court "evaluated" this meeting in 74 million roubles and thus cracked a new record both in the amount of the inflicted at the same time penalties and in juridical boundlessness. Victor Kornienko and Vladimir Katsora, leaders of "Public Initiatives" Union and organizers of the readers' conference on November 30, were levied fines respectively in 30 and 40 million roubles. The meeting took place in the Kalinin cinema, and its manager Nikolay Starostenko's "contribution" in this meeting was estimated by the judge a bit lower — only in 4 million roubles.

V.Kornienko and V.Katsora, charged with the breach of presidential decree №5, being of the mind that the initiation of a readers' conference is not a violation of laws and decrees, did not admit guilt and claimed that they would seek the appeal of this decision in all possible instances up to the international ones.

December 19 — A picket took place in the centre of Gomel under the flags of OGP and BNF in order to protect the banned newspaper "Swaboda". The pickets had in their hands broadsheets like "We love Belarus and 'Swaboda'[Freedom]", "Hands off from the independent press", "Freedom to the newspaper 'Swaboda'" and so on and handed out the flysheets with the claim to renew the newspaper's publication, several groups of militia officers and people in civil watching them closely and videotaping. Curiously enough, but this time there were no provocations, incidents or case records.

December 21 — A famous independent advocate Nadezhda Dudareva, political prisoners' defence attorney on many political trials in Belarus, was tried. Because of her observation about the judges' dependence on the governing bodies, made during the last political proceeding, she was charged with the "contempt of court" and levied a fine in 400 thousand roubles.

Appointed on the **beginning of December** premiere of the performance "Froken Julie" in the Vitebsk House of Drama did not take place. As the reason for cancellation the authorities named "unproper reading of the Strindberg".

December — Pupils of the form 8 "V" of the Maryina Gorka School tried to organise a quiz. The teacher called it overmuch Belarusian and banned it. The children, despite their teacher, decided to run it after lessons. During the quiz the head master bursted into the classroom and required to "stop this unauthorized outrage". The next morning the teacher was obliged to deliver a lecture about the Ukrainian nationalism's harm. ("Maladzevy vestnik", December 1997).

December — Alexey Koval, a citizen of Belarus, applied for political asylum in Czechia. A.Koval, a welder, a habitant of Minsk, a member of BNF and "Young Front", had been arrested for two months for taking part in the rallies in spring 1997, and on November 14 was sentenced by the Minsk City Court (judge M.Samoseyko) to two years of correctional labour at the main job with 20 per cent of his salary to be cipher out. Heretofore he had been arrested by militia for taking part in the youth procession on February 14, 1997.

The threat to be imprisoned, hanging not only over independent-minded, but over every citizen of Belarus, as well as the authoritarian at-mosphere and the mass violations of human rights by the authorities had made A.Koval to leave Belarus.

The materials of this page are prepared by the Press Service of the Human Rights Protection Committee in Belarus "Spring '96".

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We Get Encouragement, We Get Sympathy...

An international workshop, sponsored by Frederick Naumann Foundation and devoted to the human rights implementation in Central and Eastern Europe, took place November 22-29, 1997 in the European Council's Human Rights Palace, Strasbourg. Delegates from Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania, Russia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Belarus were present.

The workshop's representation level was rather high, with members of constitutional courts, human rights protection parliamentary committees, parliamentary deputies, lawyers taking part.

The Belarusian side was represented by Ales Bialatsky and Valery Buival, members of the Human Rights Protection Committee "Spring '96".

The state of human rights in Belarus was of kin to workshop members, that resulted in a special resolution on Belarus. During the resolution voting the Russian delegation had split and one of its parts did not vote. The representatives of other states spoke with one voice in support of the Belarusian resolution.

To Protect Democracy

The Resolution on Belarus

We, participants of the workshop "the Execution of the European Convention on Human Rights Protection and radical freedoms in Central and Eastern Europe" (Strasbourg, November 23-29, 1997), being aware of the state of human rights in Belarus, state:

In present-day Europe new democracies are passing through the process when the civil society is being formed on the basis of human rights' values. That is why we consider the situation in Belarus inadmissible, as the principle of the authority of law is being constantly broken. The freedom of speech is greatly limited, the opposition is harassed, Belarusian self-identity, culture and language are seriously menaced, individual freedoms of citizens are not guaranteed.

We apeal to international community to maintain the democracy and human rights in Belarus and to influence today's Belarusian government by methods, corresponding to the international law.



This Lieutenant-Colonel protects not our freedom, not our peace and not even himself but the "vertical" and its Batka's [Father's] independence from the people. It is a habitual picture for the last years' Minsk life.

No comments

Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus
Belarusian State University
Order №227D

On intensifying the legal and educational work with BSU students

In these latter days a series of unauthorised gatherings, offended against Legislation of the Republic of Belarus, RB President's Decree №5, has been held, several students of the Belarusian State University taking part in them. In March, 1997 seven students of different schools— School of Physics, School of Chemistry, School of Geography, School of History, School of Law and School of Journalism, — have been seized by the law and order officers for taking part in an authorised meeting and procession.

This points to the fact that the legal and educational work with students in many schools is unsatisfactory. The Deans and Heads of Departments have kept themselves aloof from this work, do not analyse the condition of moral and psychological climate in the students' community, do not study students' needs and feelings. On the basis of the above mentioned

I order:

1. To rebuke Pavlov A.V., the Curriculum and Social Vice-rector, Klistchenko A.P., Dean of School of Physics for blunders made in the organisation of the legal and educational work.

To warn Bogdanovich A.B., Chief of the Educational Work Office.

To show Branitsky G.A., Dean of School of Chemistry, Zhmoidyak R.A., Dean of School of Geography, Godunov V.N., Dean of School of History, Vorobyov V.P., Dean of School of Journalism, the defects in the legal and educational work with students.

2. For disorderly conduct to reprimand:

Severints Pavel Konstantinovich, a 3-year-student of School of Geography;

Semchenko Alexander Valerievich, a 4-year-student of School of History.

To rebuke:

Bury Sergey Michaelovich, a 1-year-student of the Physical Department;

Zubelevich Vitaly Zigmundovich, a 2-year-student of School of Physics;

Shashilov Victor Anatolievich, a 2-year-student of School of Physics;

Lesnyak Vladimir Pavlovich, a 3-year-student of School of Chemistry;

Zakcharkevich Michael Sergeevich, a 1-year-student of School of History;

Shidlovsky Alexey Michaelovich, a 1-year-student of School of Journalism.

3. Deans, Heads of the institutions and structural units, the faculty to intensify the educational, legal and individual work with students.

To call special attention of the lecturers, tutors, staff members, students to the necessity of the abidance to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, the legislative regulations.

4. To bring this order to the notice of the Heads of all institutions and structural units, of the faculty, of all staff members, postgraduates and students.

5. To entrust Pavlov A.V., the Curriculum and Social Vice-rector, the control over this order fulfilment.

Rector (signature) Kozulin A.V.

Reconciled with:
First Vice-rector (signature) Brigadin P.I.
Curriculum Vice-rector (signature) Korzyuk B.I.
Curriculum and Social Vice-rector (signature) Pavlov A.V.

21.03.1997

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OLD JOKES ABOUT MAIN THINGS...

The President of Congo has one hundred mistresses. One of them has AIDS. They are trying to find out who it is.

The President of the USA has one hundred Security Counsellors. One of them is a KGB agent. They are trying to find out who it is.

The President of Belarus has one hundred Trade Counsellors. One of them knows economics. They are trying to find out who it is.

Lukashenko got scared that somebody would make an attempt on his life or at least poison him. In order to avoid this he called a star-gazer and asked him: "Say, when am I to die?"

"You will die before a great feast", as usually, very insinuatingly answered the star-gazer.

"Before which feast?" asked Lukashenko.

"Your death will be a great feast for all people..."

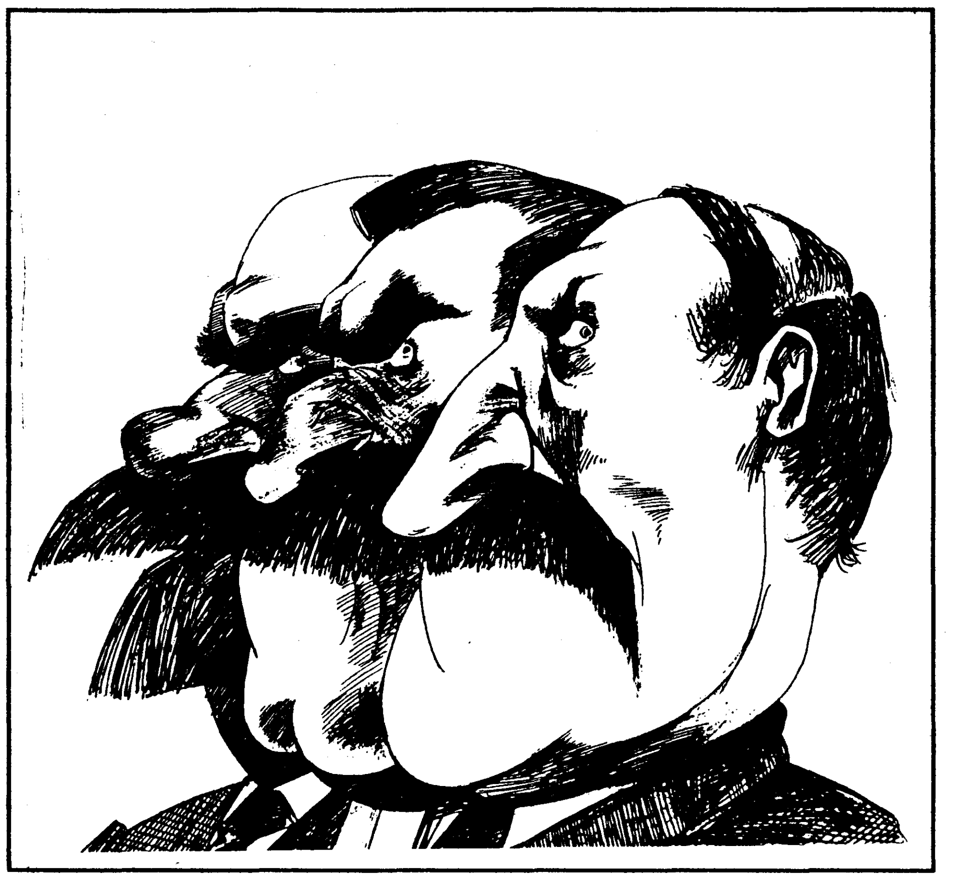
A guy, arrested on an authorised procession, was brought to a local militia office.

"What for he got arrested?"

"He is not in the same boat with us. One can see it from the first sight that he is an oppositionist..."

"Was he saying or shouting something?"

"No, he is deaf-and-dumb... But he was spitting with such an expression on his face!..."



"Do you imagine — once in Shklov I was going in a trolley and saw Lukashenko passing by!"

"It can't be true! Have they really put trolleys in operation in Shklov?!"

What is the difference between democracy and dictatorship?

Democracy: people bring out publicly the unsatisfaction with their own president.

Dictatorship: people bring out publicly the unsatisfaction with a foreign president.

Zametalin and Antonovich met each other one morning in a chock-full trolley...

One of the militia officers that were dispelling an authorised gathering refused to beat demonstrators. Later he was asked — why?

"O'K, today I will bash his head, and tomorrow he will become a minister... And what am I to do then?..."

THE FLOCK

On one island, surrounded by lands from all sides, there lived in close vicinity cows and goats. They had been living side by side on their meadows for very long, since old unrecorded times. They had so much in common and similar, even more they had different and of their own, but it did not prevent them from living in peace and harmony. And nothing made them closer than pain and adversity which happened to them rather often: sometimes wolves forayed, sometimes hail killed their grass.

The Goatish historians wrote that they had common ancestors: whether goathorn or goatbull, that sometime they did not have boundaries and lived together. And it could be proved very easily. So much alike were their languages: cows' "mu-u-uh" and goats' "me-e-eh". The difference in one letter.

They would live like this till to-day but for one unpleasant occasion: the goats had trampled down the whole their meadow. They scampered over it, snatched more delicious grass before each other, and the meadow decayed before its time, got overgrown with bristly weeds — neither tasty nor nourishing. What for the cows, they looked after their meadow, and the grass was there thick and juicy, and there was enough of it to eat till the new one. They understood that there neither exist nor will exist a land better than their own, given by Heaven.

The goats could have thought: why is it so — the land is the same, and it is raining at the same time, and the sun is shining, but the cows' meadow gets thicker while their own decays. But why should they think about their tomorrow, if already today they can sponge on others? And they began to drop in on the cows' meadow more and more often. They started with the talks about cognation, common ancestors, brotherhood and mutual help, then they were coming just to eat, and afterwards began to stay on, alone, with kids... When the cows awoke, the meadow was crowded with goats. Wherever they looked, "me-e-eh" was heard everywhere. The calves loved the goatish language. "Me-e-eh" — it sounds so soft and sweetly! Unlike "mu-u-uh", which is primitive and uncultured. They could speak Goatish both at home and while visiting, say, sheep (they tended to change their "be-e-eh" for "me-e-eh", as the difference was only in one letter), or deer in the tundra, or yaks in the mountains, or saigas in the heath. There were no strangers. The Goatish language became the language of interhornish relationships.

Everything goatish — in other words civilised — came into vogue among cows: the bulls grew beards, the cows gave less milk. And they stopped to look after their meadow — they began to trample it as if it was not their own... The goats sometimes took some milk to pass it into their flock, sometimes some hay. Gradually the cows began to starve.

But there were a little of those who understood what kind of misfortune had happened: the meadow was fed to goats and trampled, the cows were speaking Goatish and their own language made them laugh. There were little of them, but they did not keep still: they began telling the truth, showing the cows where the trouble came from, who their enemy was.

The bulls and the goats that called themselves chiefs and heads, did not like it terribly. 'We have to feed the flock, vociferated they, while you grow demagogy, escalate confrontation... If there is hay, there is a song. The main thing is that there were no war...'

Those ones, who had understood that the bulls to the flock about Bellyful were talking and because of it the minds of the latter grew dim, were struck dumb: would the cows indeed never understand where from and with whom the grief and starvation had come and how to make away with them? But is it possible to understand, when you've heard for many years so beautiful words about the common future, when there is indeed nothing to eat, when you think about it only in Goatish...

Not long ago I've been on that island, and the cows' heads are aching about how to feed their kids, how to get away from the ageless hunger... And they say that the bulls and the goats have found already the guilty of these sorrows. Eh-heh...

Boris PYATROVICH

1988

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